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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TIP: Rheinland-Pfalz Pioneers Innovative Concept to Fight Trafficking in Persons, Sees Positive Results

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The government of Rheinland-Pfalz (R-P) has developed a victim-oriented approach to combating human trafficking that offers police protection, NGO (non-governmental organization) counseling, and immigration advice for trafficked women. The initiative supports women willing to testify against trafficking syndicates. In contrast to Germany's national TIP witness protection scheme, victims are required only to provide information related to their own experiences (as opposed to an indictment of senior figures within the trafficking organization) to qualify for the program. Several other German states have expressed interest in adopting R-P's approach because of its success in procuring the cooperation of victims often afraid to testify against their captors. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) ConGen Frankfurt Pol/Econ representatives met with R-P Interior Ministry and police officials to discuss the state's unique approach to combating trafficking in persons. Officials explained that the initiative was a joint effort by the Ministries of Interior, Education, and Labor, the R-P police, and NGOs to provide comprehensive support to the victims of human trafficking. The program provides counseling, police protection, and immigration assistance for those women willing to testify against human trafficking syndicates. In contrast to the national-level TIP witness protection program, women do not have to directly finger senior trafficking figures or provide detailed information on the structures of trafficking syndicates to qualify for services under the R-P initiative. Victims enjoy full anonymity for the length of their stay in Germany.

13. (SBU) R-P Police head of Witness Protection Wolfgang Merken noted that police raids are responsible for the discovery of most TIP victims. Once the women agree to cooperate and enter police custody, they receive advice and aid from NGO counselors who accompany them for the duration of the trial. Following the proceedings, the NGO works with the R-P Immigration Office to facilitate the victim's voluntary return home. Those who wish to stay in the country are eligible to apply for asylum but are subject to the same immigration regulations governing other potential asylees. The R-P Immigration Office assists those who do not qualify with repatriation to their home country.

14. (SBU) Interior Ministry officials admitted that long-term financing of the program had been the biggest initial hurdle. Rheinland-Pfalz implemented the concept in 2003 and asked local communities to fund associated costs from social welfare budgets. While the program helped eleven trafficking victims that year, local communities balked at the continued financial burden and refused to fund the initiative for 2004. Ultimately, the Interior Ministry appropriated a yearly allocation of 100,000 euros (from its budget for the re-integration of ethnic Germans) to fund the program. Merken estimates that about 20 women will qualify for the program this year. The vast majority of R-P's TIP victims (87.2%) come from Eastern Europe, with the remainder hailing largely from Africa (4.3%), Asia (3.4%), and North America (1.4%).

15. (SBU) Interior Ministry official Eberhard Weber contends that information provided by victims under R-P's new program has increased TIP convictions and provided a deterrent to trafficking. Weber cites a major recent R-P TIP conviction obtained through victim eyewitness testimony as proof of his claim (overall figures are unavailable because of the relative newness of the program). Moreover, Weber asserts that Rheinland-Pfalz's concept and its successful implementation have attracted the attention of several other German states, including Baden-Wuerttemberg and Hesse. The European Union has also expressed interest in Rheinland-Pfalz's initiative as part of its greater emphasis on TIP-related issues.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Originally, the federal interagency anti-trafficking working group developed a model for interagency cooperation at the laender level that was offered to the

laender for their use. Since the laender are responsible for coordinating the interagency cooperation in trafficking victims cases, somewhat different approaches have been followed by each land depending on the scope of the problem in the land, resources, etc. Rheinland-Pfalz's integrated approach to combating human trafficking springs from a need for credible eyewitness testimony to obtain convictions as well as a recognition of the physical, emotional, and social impact of trafficking on its victims. The comprehensive approach results in a well-coordinated interagency response that reduces the potential for conflicts to arise between organizations dealing with victims of trafficking. The program has also benefited from the fact that R-P has only a small portion of Germany's total number of TIP victims (62 out of 805 in 2003) which keeps the scale of the program at a more easily managed level. END COMMENT.

17. (U) This message has been coordinated with Embassy Berlin.

BODDE